

Making The Connection:

Cross Cultural Communication Skills
relevant in reaching Southeast Asian
Families and Communities



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The Issues

- Many parks and other protected areas are beginning to see a **substantial increase in use** by families and other users with roots in Southeast Asia.
- There is a **low visibility** of land management agencies among ethnic groups including Southeast Asians

The Issues

- **The survival of parks, open spaces, and wild places** may be dependent on how relevant we can make these places to a changing America.
- Research by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers suggests that land management agencies have **poor written, verbal, and non-verbal communication** with various ethnic groups.

The Issues

- Some of our customers do not trust us, because of how we are perceived, or how we are uniformed.
- On the other side of the fence, there is an under-representation of minorities in the workforce.

The Issues

- Federal land management agencies and their partners need training and practice in cultural competencies (applied cultural understanding and a contextual understanding of behavior from different cultures) in order to succeed.

Parks are for People

- We have a responsibility to provide information and education to all Americans and all visitors
- We have a duty to protect the resource

Parks are for People

- Being able to get close to new audiences and under served audiences can save lives.
- Examples include drownings suffered by members of new audiences in deep water lakes who are used to shallow streams and rivers.

The Need

- **Executive Order 12898:** Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations (February 11, 1994)
- Directed Federal agencies to
“...identify differential patterns of consumption of natural resources among minority populations and low-income populations” and to ensure that programs, policies, or activities that substantially affect... the environment do not exclude persons from receiving the benefits of such programs as a result of race, color, or national origin.

The Need



- Exposure to new audiences alone is not sufficient
- Agencies and their partners must engage in **active learning processes** to develop and practice non-evaluative and non-judgmental interactions with cultural groups.

Intercultural Communications Workshop in San Antonio


- A joint project of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Intermountain Region of the NPS, the pilot course focused on:
- **Cultural competencies and**
- **Cross cultural communications**



Background

- With exception of the West coast and a few notable exceptions, Asians are relatively new to North and South America
- 60% of world's population lives in Asia
- China was the first culture to have a written language

Nations of Origin

- **Asians come from a wide variety of countries and cultures;**
 - **East – Korea, Japan**
 - **Southeast - Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos (Hmong), Indonesia**
 - **South - India, Pakistan, Bangladesh**
 - **Central - Afghanistan, Pakistan, etc.**
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The Basics



- The term Asian itself suggests that one group with roots in Asia is like another.
- This is a fallacy.
- Asian groups may be the most elusive to federal agencies.

The Basics

- There is a great variation of Asian cultures
- Never assume one Asian group is just like another.
- There are many conflicts between groups, including neighboring groups.
- Don't jump to a conclusion as to what background Asian people are from – It could be insulting if you pick the wrong one.

Languages Spoken at Home

- **Of 71,4386 Vietnamese Americans in the US (2000 Data)**
 - 71,4386 spoke English at home (6.9%)
 - 957,700 reported speaking a language other than English (93.1%)
- **Of 149,734 Hmong in the US (2000 Data)**
 - 6,566 speak English only at home (4.4%)
 - 143,168 speak Hmong at home (95.6%)

Education

➤ As an example, in 2000, Vietnamese Americans reported:

➤ Less than 9th grade	18%
➤ 9th to 12th grade, no diploma	20%
➤ High school graduate	19%
➤ Some college, no degree	15.7%
➤ Associate degree	7.7%
➤ Bachelor's degree	14.5%
➤ Graduate or professional degree	4.9%

Asian cultures and the concept of Nature

- Western culture is seen as putting human society above nature with the Earth being dirty or impure.
- In many Eastern cultures, nature is seen as being inclusive of everything and the Earth is not inferior.
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Outdoor Recreation Trends

- Among visitors have been seen as being are suspicious of rangers – They have been seen to “freeze” in place to make rangers clarify their intent.
- One trend by Asian American visitors is day use by large family units
- There seems to be substantial interest in educational and interpretive exhibits

Outdoor Use Trends

- Different levels of acculturation seem to lead to different outdoor use patterns.
- The Corps of Engineers recorded communication difficulties with the least acculturated groups.
- Recreation patterns similar to White Americans were reported for the more acculturated Asian visitors – camping, water sports, etc.

Asian Americans and Acculturation

- Asian Americans are from many backgrounds and there are many levels of acculturation
- The US Army Corps of Engineers has documented communication difficulties with least acculturated groups
- With the more acculturated Asian groups, outdoor recreational interests were more similar to those of White Americans – camping, water sports, etc.

Consumptive Resource Uses

- In many Asian cultures, the idea of public land means that since the land belongs to no one, anything goes.
- A number of Asian cultures tend to have small houses and are used to using the outdoors to host large events and celebrations.

Consumptive Resource Uses

- There are issues regarding the taking of endangered species for historical medicinal uses.
- Subsistence fishing and hunting is a use engaged in by some Southeast Asian groups.

Hunting and Fishing Law Enforcement

- Some Asian people are used to corrupt governments and don't trust government employees.
- The force of law in some Asian countries is very weak, even with a strong government.
- As a result, some Asians may not see laws as absolutes and may see little reason to trust Government officials in the area of wildlife management.
- To communicate on these issues, it is better to stress the social aspects rather than laws and regulations.

Asian Americans and Discrimination in Outdoor Recreation

Lee (1972) noted that Chinese residents of a California community were hesitant to visit a nearby regional park for racial reasons.

- One of Lee's informants shared the comment:

“Garfield Park is not for Chinese. They cannot feel that it is their own,...”

After all, it is only very recently that they have been permitted to use it,...It belongs to the White American culture,...”

Planning for New Customers

- Some Asian families have said that they enjoy going on family nature hikes at a leisurely pace.
- Asian families suggest that they enjoy nature as it exists, rather than trying to introduce all of the comforts of home into an outing.

Planning for New Customers

➤ Nature education have also been reported as being very popular with Asian families.

➤ This creates the need to accommodate kids, parents, and grandparents.



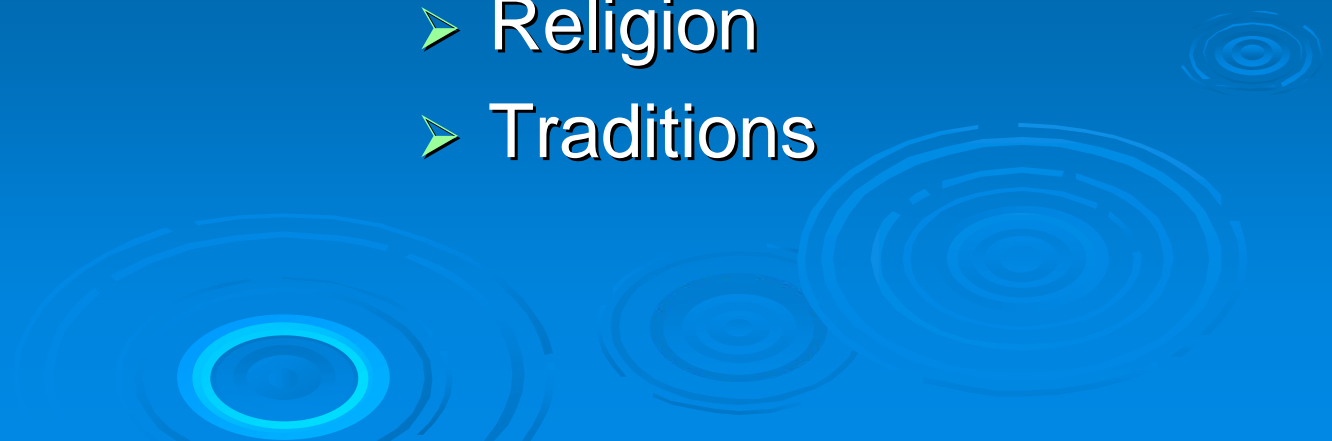
Understanding Culture

- Culture is how we have been programmed from family and a variety of sources
- Culture is the behavior we “know” is right and right for us, like standing up for an older person on the bus
- We are unaware of our own culture until we encounter someone different
- Culture is made up of what we see and don't see
- An agency culture may supercede individual culture while at work.

Understanding Culture

- Egalitarian/Hierarchical
- Direct/Indirect Communication
- Emphasis on the Individual vs. Emphasis on the Group
- Linear vs. Lateral Conceptualization
- Logical vs. Intuitive Thinking
- Task vs. Relationship Focus
- Confrontation in Conflict
Is confrontation direct or indirect in the culture?
- Preference for Harmony
- Change vs. Tradition Oriented
- Strict vs. Elastic Time Consciousness

Understanding Culture

- Social norms that are perceived to be normal
 - A way of living and looking at things
 - What you are taught and accept
 - Shared beliefs
 - Values
 - Rituals
 - Religion
 - Traditions
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The “Iceberg” Model of Culture

- The Tip of the Iceberg
 - Physical appearance
 - Language
 - Food
- Non-verbal mannerisms, body language
- Music
- Interactions with others
- Reaction to authority figures, etc.

Below the Water Line

- Customs
- Values
- Motivation
- Family dynamics
- Feelings
- Expectations
- Religion Practices
- Personal history
- Sexuality
- Education
- Drug preference
- Nationality
- Legacy of illness, addictions, and abuse

Cultural Competencies

- Cultural Competencies are those:
 - Behaviors,
 - Attitudes,
 - Skills and,
 - Policies,
- that help organizations and employees work effectively with people of different cultures

Cultural Competencies

➤ Understanding and using culturally appropriate:

- Gestures
- Traditions
- Idioms

- Knowledge
- Educational Approaches
- Problem solving techniques

Developing Cultural Competencies

- 1. Developing an applied awareness of culture
- 2. Using this practical understanding of culture

Knowing Yourself

➤ The “Halo” Effect

Perceptions of things such as tattoos, holiday foods, and other things can trigger immediate, negative, and uncontrollable reactions

➤ The “Because” System

We continue to do things in the ways we have done them in the past because it is the way we have always done them

Knowing your own culture

- “**LOLO**” – We **lock on** to the things that connect with our values and;

We **lock out** the things that disconnect with our values.

- We see what we expect to see. Culture is an important factor in perceptions.
- Perceptions are learned and selective.

Cross Cultural Communications

- The informed exchange of values, feelings, and information between people who participate in different cultures



Cross Cultural Communications

➤ Non Verbal Communications

- Body language
- Touching Children
- Shaking hands
- Smiling
- Overcoming the Uniform

➤ Verbal Communications

- Knowing who to talk to first
- Not speaking too loudly
- Not speaking the language may not be the biggest problem

Language

- Making the effort to communicate is more important than speaking the language
- Spending time is an important aspect of communicating with many cultures, Asian cultures included.
- Asians in the United States and Asian Americans speak many different languages and dialects
- Do not make the mistake in thinking that Asian Americans do not speak English

Everyday Techniques

- Smiling seems to be a symbol of good will worldwide
- Sharing food is a universal way of giving everyone something in common.



Everyday Techniques: Feedback




- One Hmong visitor suggested that a mechanism was needed so the Hmong could share information about their culture with other visitors.

Conclusion

As minority populations grow, so does their presence at outdoor recreation sites.

If land management agencies are to survive they and their partners will have to make their sites visitor friendly and accommodating?

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Discussion and Dialogue

